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Ms. Robin Sweeney
EIS Document Manager
Office of Transportation
Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management
U.S. Department of Energy
1551 Hillshire Drive, M/S 011
Las Vegas, NV 89134

RE: Comments to the Scope of the Environmental Impact Statement for the Alignment,
Construction, and Operation of a Rail Line to a Geologic Repository at Yucca
Mountain

Dear Ms. Sweeney:

On behalf of the Caliente City Council I am Requesting that the following issues be addressed within the environmental impact statement (EIS) for the alignment, construction, and operation of a rail line to a geologic repository at Yucca Mountain. The City of Caliente has considered timely resolution of Yucca Mountain repository related transportation issues to be key to ensuring that a safe system which provides important local economic benefits is developed. The City is encouraged by the Department of Energy's (DOE) decision to proceed with the identification of the preferred mode of transportation (rail) and the preferred rail corridor (Caliente) for further evaluation.

The City of Caliente agrees with DOE's decision to prepare a comprehensive EIS which addresses alignment alternatives, rail line construction and operation. The City anticipates that said EIS will be capable of supporting a DOE final alignment decision which minimizes impacts to private property owners and local facilities of the State of Nevada and the City. Where DOE identifies impacts to existing private and public landowners/facilities which can not be avoided, the City requests that the EIS identify feasible methods to mitigate such impacts, including, where other options do not exist, compensation.

The City of Caliente encourages DOE to identify and assess potential economic impacts/benefits of various alignment alternatives. As a result of said analysis, the City would expect to be able to determine which of the alignment alternatives involves the least adverse impacts and the greatest potential economic benefits to Caliente and its residents. Consideration of economic benefits should include use of Caliente-based contractors, employees and locally derived construction materials in the construction of the rail line.

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Examples of Caliente businesses which may be capable of supporting rail line construction include consulting engineers and surveyors; diesel fuel and gasoline; truck parts and tires; trucking; earthwork contractors; framing contractors; food services and lodging, among others. Beyond construction, the economic impact of using Caliente-based vendors and employment of local residents to maintain and operate the rail line should be evaluated within the EIS.

The City of Caliente believes the EIS should also should serve to characterize economic impacts associated with locating facilities necessary to support construction, operation and maintenance of a Caliente rail spur to Yucca Mountain within or proximate to the City. Examples of facilities which might be located within or near the City include a rail spur operations and maintenance facility; a communications and shipment tracking center; rolling stock storage and maintenance area; crew training facility; and DOE/contractor provided security and/or emergency first response capabilities. The EIS should provide a level of analysis sufficient to support a possible DOE decision to locate these and other transportation system facilities within or near to the City of Caliente.

Every reasonable means to maximize favorable rail and transportation system economic impacts within the City of Caliente should be considered within the EIS. The City expects DOE to consider shared use of the railroad for general commerce and for the transport of locally procured materials for the construction of a repository. To address the possibility that DOE may not complete construction of the railroad early enough to allow is use for conveying materials during the initial construction of the repository, the EIS should evaluate impacts of a rail to truck inter-modal facility at Caliente for shipment of repository construction materials. Similarly, the EIS should consider as an alternative, the potential for a rail to truck inter-modal facility to be required be DOE for use in transporting spent nuclear fuel and other high level radioactive waste to a repository at Yucca Mountain in advance of or in lieu of direct rail access to the Yucca Mountain site. Of particular interest to the City will be consideration in the EIS of the potential for inter-modal facility related switches and rail sidings constructed as part of a DOE inter-modal facility to also be available for use in facilitating rail access to the City's Meadow Valley Industrial Park.

While the City of Caliente's review of the EIS for the Yucca Mountain geologic repository found that document to have evaluated health risks (both radiological and non-radiological) associated with construction and operation of the Caliente rial line and related inter-modal/truck transportation systems, the City offered comments to DOE

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indicating that the repository EIS did not adequately consider feasible methods to mitigate said risks. The City believes the potential risk associated with construction and operation of the Caliente rail line and related inter-modal facility can be effectively managed through mitigation and that such mitigation offers the potential for reducing the overall risk related to the thousands of annual rail shipments of hazardous materials through the community. The City of Caliente believes the current rail alignment EIS must identify and evaluate feasible methods to mitigate risks. Appropriate impact mitigation includes training, transportation facilities and equipment for emergency first responders, emergency medical services and emergency communications. In addition, the City considers locating transportation facilities and employees in the community to be effective elements of a comprehensive mitigation strategy.

In defining the scope of decisions upon which the rail alignment EIS may be relied upon to support, the City of Caliente encourages DOE to include as many elements of the within-Nevada transportation system which may be required to construct, operate and maintain said system. In this regard, the City anticipates the scope of the EIS to include National Environmental Policy Act coverage of all possible rail system related decisions which might need to be made by DOE, including mitigation of impacts. Finally, the City of Caliente encourages DOE to enter into cooperative agreements with the City and other local governments along the Caliente rail corridor as a mechanism for identifying and resolving impact issues and in designing and implementing effective strategies for mitigation of impacts.

Sincerely,

Kevin J. Phillips
Mayor

e-mail: [REDACTED]

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